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The change of the Greek foreign policy strategy towards Turkey: the Greek official political discourse

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"The change of the Greek foreign policy strategy towards Turkey: the Greek official political discourse"

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ABSTRACT:

For many decades, relations between Greece and Turkey have been strained and limited to a thin thread of formal contacts between the two countries. Captured in a "prisoner's dilemma" the two countries have viewed each other with mistrust and prejudice.

Within this framework, the official discourse in Greece was focused on the problems in the bilateral relations. The European perspective of Turkey has been constantly discussed in the national Parliament with reference to the concept of national security and safety. Contrary to the European dialogue on the EU enlargement and Turkey, Greece's main concern was the external threat imposed, while the internal reforms of the country and the role of Islam remained an issue of low interest.

In the midst of 1999, Greece, in a courageous effort, embarked on a new policy of promoting advantageous cooperation on the so-called "low politics" issues. Recently and in particular after the European Summit in Helsinki in December 1999, where the Greek delegation abandoned the "veto" policy, the new political agenda is focused on the encouragement of the Turkish candidacy. But why has Greece become an active supporter of the Turkish EU accession prospect? How is this change of the Greek foreign policy explained? Is the shift of the "traditional" Greek foreign policy beliefs towards Turkey reflected in the national political dialogue?

The tensions of the past and the significance of the change of the Greek Foreign Policy will be addressed in the current analysis. Though, the main question of the paper remains how far the change of the national strategy of the Greek foreign policy on the European perspective of Turkey is reflected in the official discourse in the National Parliament. Does the official national discourse also change or does it remain unaltered? Furthermore, the paper examines whether the objective of the change of the political agenda is thoroughly explained by the National Representatives.

Greece and Turkey: the troubled relationship

In the case of Greece and Turkey long years of conflict has depleted the goodwill and trust that had once been nurtured by Venizelos and Atatürk in the 1930s and had endured until the late 1950s. Since then, both countries developed powerful political, military as well as economic constituencies against dialogue and cooperation. Such constituencies also nurtured a whole world view or world map characterized by slogans such as "Turks have no other friends than Turks" and "Greeks do not have a brother nation". These slogans were also accompanied by elaborate conspiracy theories depicting a world ganging up on them. In the case of Turkey, Greece was depicted as a country longing to achieve the 'megali idea' and conquer Istanbul while in Greece Turkey came to be seen as wanting to revive the Ottoman Empire and bring back at least a good part of Greece under its control.[1] Moreover, Greece was for long time convinced that Turkey's conquest of the Northern Cyprus was merely the first stage of a Turkish plan to impose a *Pax Turkana* in the Aegean and revive the Ottoman Empire.[2] Deep mistrust and suspicion of the other side created an environment were decision-makers had their hands tied even if they in person may have sought cooperation in an effort to address and hopefully solve conflicts between the two countries. On the other hand, where decision makers, such as for example the efforts for dialogue of January 1988 led by Andreas Papandreu and Turgut Ozal known as the 'spirit of Davos', did break away from the established taboos, these efforts did not bear significant fruits. Similarly, until very recently efforts at introducing 'confidence building measures' did not yield major break through either. The example of Imia/Kardak crisis in 1996 demonstrated how a group of self declared mind guards (on this occasion journalists) could easily destroy any progress that might have been achieved and then even bring the two countries to the brink of war.

Greece and Turkey locked in a 'prisoner's dilemma':

In the case of Greece and Turkey one would have expected that after almost half a century of conflict both sides would have discovered that cooperation promises better pay-offs for both sides. Furthermore, a long string of third parties such as the United States and the European Union have tried to mediate and nudge the parties

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[1] See: Kirisci K., "*The enduring Rivalry between Greece and Turkey: Can democratic Peace break it?*", Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations, Vol.1, No.1, Spring 2002, p.40
[2] See: Nachmani Am., "*Turkey facing a new millennium. Coping with intertwined conflicts*", Manchester University Press, 2003, p.166.

towards cooperation. Neither process has worked in the case of Greece and Turkey. Why?

A number of interrelated reasons could be cited. Firstly and most importantly, these two countries are locked in a 'prisoner's dilemma'. The socialization process of decision-makers in Greece and Turkey and the two societies at large is such that the conflicts between the two countries are seen as part of a 'zero-sum' game. If one side wins the other side inevitably looses. This has also been reinforced by the fact that as the nature of the 'game' between the two countries forced decision-makers to defect, they have justified the defection by blaming the other side for not giving in, in other words for not accepting to 'loose'. This has had the effect of reinforcing mutual mistrust and lack of confidence as well as seeking evil intensions in any positive move (in terms of breaking out of the 'prisoner's dilemma) that the other side might make.[3] Such a process in turn has prevented a constructive 'communication' to develop during the Cold War as well as after it.

At the same time, American foreign policy makers have considered the conflicts between Greece and Turkey to be detrimental to U.S. interests. They have initiated many efforts to reconcile both parties, but the most they seem to have achieved is to keep the two parties from becoming actually involved in a war. One major reason is that the two parties have not seen the U.S. as an 'honest broker'. Greece has often viewed the U.S. with suspicion and feared a U.S. bias for Turkey because of the strategic importance attributed by U.S. decision-makers to Turkey and its military capabilities. Likewise, Turkish decision makers have also suspected the U.S. for favouring the other side. They have viewed the U.S. executive as being controlled by the 'Greek lobby' in the American Congress.[4]

The European Union too has attempted on numerous occasions to play the role of an 'honest broker', has failed however so far to achieve much. Primarily, because Turkish decision-makers and the public at large have viewed the EU to favour Greece. The fact that Greece is a member of the EU and is actually part of its decision-making process has reinforced this view. Common ground in Turkey has been the perception that Greece is using the EU against Turkey. Equally, the EU, rather than having a positive role, is seen as being a co-conspirator with Greece.

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[3] See: Gürel S., "*Turkey and Greece: a difficult Aegean relationship*", in: Balkir C. & A. Williams (eds.), "Turkey and Europe", Pinter Publishers, London and NY, 1993, p. 161 ff.
[4] See: Kirisci K., "*The enduring Rivalry between Greece and Turkey: Can democratic Peace break it?*", Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations, Vol.1, No.1, Spring 2002, p.38.

Therefore, both in the case of the U.S. as well as the EU, third party intervention has not had the effect of altering pay-off calculations in a manner that gives cooperation a chance. On the contrary, it could be argued that it has had the opposite effect of making the parties even more suspicious of each other and become even more entrenched in their positions.

The strategic disorientation in foreign policy after the Cold War

For both Greece and Turkey, the end of the Cold War, and especially the disintegration of Yugoslavia, meant the collapse of a secure regional environment. It is impossible to define an international structure just in materialistic terms.[5] Not only for Turkey and Greece, but for all the actors involved, **"**the Cold War provided a structure interwoven with common meanings, experiences, and understandings which helped make sense of the world around them and define their identities and interests accordingly. This structure's collapse deprived many actors on the world scene of this conceptual framework, producing a sense of disorientation. The post-Cold War era created great uncertainty as to the role of states and their institutions."[6]

This sense of loss led to many fluctuations in foreign policy, and these fluctuations were all part of a new social learning process in Greek-Turkish relations. The main problem for Greece and Turkey in the post-Cold War era has been "a strong amount of lag in adjusting self-definition to current circumstances," or "a rear-view mirror self-perception."[7]

Both Greece and Turkey were going through a very difficult period of readjustment and redefinition of roles. In this process, both of them felt themselves isolated by their Western partners. In Greece, the Balkan crisis led to an increase in the feeling of insecurity by adding a new element to the old threat from the east (i.e., Turkey). As Loukas Tsoukalis argues, Greece's European partners mostly remained indifferent to her concerns and fears. When Greece was "chastised by paternalistic Europeans for not behaving like civilized Scandinavians in the Balkans [this

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[5] See: Nachmani Am., "Turkey facing a new millennium. Coping with intertwined conflicts", Manchester University Press, 2003, p. 167.
[6] See: Van Coufadakis, "Greek Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War Era: Issues and Challenges," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (Summer 1996), p. 41.
[7] See: Couloumbis Th.A. and Th. Veremis, "Greek Foreign Policy in the 21st Century," 2000. <http://www.greece.gr/POLITICS/International/ForeignPolicy21stCentury.stm>.

experience] confirmed to Greeks the profound ignorance of their partners of the history and the realities of the region."[8]

Turkey went through a similar feeling of isolation with the end of the Cold War, and many people started to think that she had lost her strategic significance for the NATO alliance.[9] Furthermore, the uneasy relationship with the European Union led to the feeling that she was also marginalized in the European continent. This sense of isolation reached a climax especially after the 1997 Luxembourg Summit where the European countries excluded her from the list of prospective candidates for EU membership. Ziya Onis describes the result of the summit as "a generalized sense of isolationism, not present at any other stage in Turkish history during the post-World War II."[10]

Overcoming the feeling of insecurity and sense of isolationism required a very difficult process of "social learning" for Turkey and Greece during which a struggle between competing concepts of national security and interests emerged. At first, war in the Balkans led to the rise of a strongly nationalist approach in Greek political culture and an extension of the political influence of the Church.[11]

Similarly, Turkey's frustration in its relations with Europe led to a quest for different methods of self-assertion. One of these proposed strategies was that of creating a "Turkish world extending from Adriatic to China. As Kostas Ifantis makes clear, this claim had a profound influence on Greek perceptions of the Turkish threat: "For the first time in Turkey's post-Ottoman history, the country's foreign policy elites attempted to revise the traditional Ataturkist precepts regarding the dangers of international activism... With the disintegration of the Soviet Union and turmoil in the Balkans, Ankara was poised to play a leading role across a vast region, from Eastern Europe to Western China." These types of neo-Ottomanist or neo-imperial claims calling for the extension of Turkish power over a wider region had negative effects on Greek-Turkish relations since they led to an increase in Greek sense of insecurity. Many of the Greek policymakers considered these types of Turkish claims a proof of

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[8] See: Tsoulakis L., "Is Greece an Awkward Partner?" in Kevin Featherstone and Kostas Ifantis (eds), *Greece in a Changing Europe: Between European Integration and Balkan Disintegration* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 28.

[9] Kirisci K., "Turkey and the Mediterranean," in Stelios Stavridis, Theodore Couloumbis, and Thanos Veremis (eds), *The Foreign Policies of the European Union's Mediterranean States and Applicant Countries in the 1990s,* London: MacMillan Press, 1999, pp. 280-281.

[10] Ziya Onis, "Turkey, Europe, and Paradoxes of Identity: Perspectives on the International Context of Democratization," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Vol. 10 , No. 3, Summer 1999, p. 125.

[11] Pettifer J., "Greek Political Culture and Foreign Policy," in Kevin Featherstone and Kostas Ifantis (eds), *Greece in a Changing Europe*, p. 21.

Turkish expansionism or irredentism, and this inevitably led to an increase in the Greek perceptions of threat and insecurity.

The fluctuations in foreign policies of both countries indicate an uncertainty in strategic orientation that was a natural result of the post-Cold War international environment. For both countries, the Imia-Kardak crisis of 1996 marks the culmination of this strategic disorientation. It is not easy to understand this crisis in materialistic terms. For many outsiders, it was a crisis over two tiny, barren islets inhabited only by goats. Indeed, the challenge that this crisis posed for those who prefer to explain international relations in materialistic terms finds one of its most interesting expressions in the words of the U.S. National Security Council spokesman David Johnson: "Sovereignty prompts people to do strange things."[12]

Some have argued that the Imia-Kardak crisis strengthened negative perceptions and hostile feelings in both Greece and Turkey, thus bringing an increase in the security dilemma. However, it is also possible to argue that the Imia-Kardak crisis created the first motives toward a rapprochement in Greek-Turkish relations. In other words, the crisis can be considered as a "blessing in disguise" since it generated strong pressure from the United States and the European Union, especially on Athens, to reach an understanding with Ankara, and compelled Simitis' government to abandon Greece's long-held policy of 'no talks with Turkey.'[13]

Ironically, then, this crisis, with its influence on the initiation of a dialogue between two countries, marks not only the culmination of a conflict but also the first steps towards overcoming the obstacles in the way of cooperation and positive identification. It is also important to note that the Imia-Kardak crisis resulted in an increase in the "civic diplomacy" or "second-track diplomacy" which is usually associated with the earthquakes.

Of course, the Imia-Kardak crisis of 1996 was not the only crisis that left a deep impact on the Greek-Turkish relations in the post-Cold War era. Two other significant crises were over the S-300 missiles[14] and regarding the Turkish capture of the Kurdish insurgent leader Abdullah Ocalan.[15]

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[12] See: "Brinkmen on the Rocks: Greece and Turkey Stop Just Short of War Over a Pair of Stony Outcroppings in the Wine-Dark Sea," *Time International*, February 12, 1996, Vol. 147, No. 7.

[13] See: Athanassopoulou E., "Blessing in Disguise? The Imia-Kardak Crisis and Greek-Turkish Relations," *Mediterranean Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Winter 1997), p. 97.

[14] The S-300 crisis erupted after Athens decided to station anti-aircraft missiles in Cyprus to safeguard the aerial corridor from Greece to Cyprus. Turkish perception of these missiles as offensive weapons ushered in another stressful period in Greek-Turkish relations.

[15] Another crisis in Greek-Turkish relations broke out after the February 1999 capture of Abdullah Ocalan, head of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK). It became clear that Ocalan had received material

Many expected Greek-Turkish relations to sour following the Ocalan affair in 1999 but, similar to the previous crises, this problem also led to the emergence of new possibilities in Greek-Turkish relations.

Critical rethinking in the foreign policy

Discussing these three crises in Greek-Turkish relations in the post-Cold War era one can observe significant changes in foreign policy practices in both countries. These practices, though in some cases clearly results of external pressures, imply some further changes regarding how Greece and Turkey perceive and define themselves and each other. Thus, in both countries, it is possible to observe the initial stages of a process of "critical rethinking" in foreign policy which resulted in an intentional transformation of interests, roles and identities.[16]

In Greek-Turkish relations, the new structural context provided the necessity of a redefinition of roles and identities. The most important reward of this rethinking was a secure regional environment, which is vital in a world of constant flux. A culture of cooperation formed on the basis of mutual trust and interests was apparently less threatening for security than a culture of conflict. Furthermore, it became clear that one's own security depended on the security of the other.

According to Wendt[17], the first stage in the transformation of roles and interests through critical self-reflection is the breakdown of consensus about identity commitments. In the case of Greece and Turkey, the identity commitments are centered on the belief that the nation is encircled by enemies. Since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Turkish foreign policy has been defined by what has been called the "*Sevres Syndrome*," a sense of being encircled by enemies attempting the destruction of the Turkish state. This has led to a feeling of suspicion, especially toward neighboring countries.

A similar feeling of "encirclement" can be seen in Greece. As Tsoulakis argues, "the image which most Greeks have of their country is that of a fort being surrounded by real and potential enemies". This kind of a "siege mentality" fuelling

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assistance and a safe haven from some official circles in Greece. Turkey accused Greece of giving support to terrorism, and Greece's government also faced severe domestic criticism.

[16] Wendt argues that there are two preconditions for critical strategic thinking to take place: Firstly, there must be a reason to think of oneself in new terms. Secondly, the sanctions of rethinking must not be greater than its rewards. After claiming that the actors engage in self-reflection in case these conditions are present, he analyzes Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of "New Thinking" as an example of this process. (See: Wendt A., "Anarchy is what states make of it: social construction of power politics." *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, 391-425)

[17] See: Wendt A., "Anarchy is what states make of it: social construction of power politics." *International Organization*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992, 391-425

mistrust has pervaded foreign policymaking in both countries for many years, and negatively influenced their bilateral relations by imprisoning both in a security dilemma.

The end of the Cold War and disintegration of Yugoslavia left Turkey and Greece with two options: They would both stay committed to an identity based on a sense of encirclement and try to survive the post-Cold War turbulence on their own, or they would cooperate to establish a security regime inconceivable without their mutual participation. Without a change in foreign policymaking in both countries alongside a reconceptualization of national identity, the second option would not be feasible.

 In the post-Cold War era, both countries witnessed changes in the domestic scene. In Greece, the restructuring of the PASOK party under the leadership of Costas Simitis led to a transformation of foreign policymaking, also influenced by the European Union. In Turkey, though the change was not less dramatic, the Cold War's end led to a weakened consensus in foreign policymaking, making possible the emergence of alternative interpretations of national interest, identity, and threat.

Apart from the role of the changing domestic actors, significant events in the international arena showed it would be harder to survive with the old conceptions of foreign policymaking. The Kosovo crisis was critical in pushing the leaders toward regional cooperation and clearly marked a shift away from traditional patterns of foreign policy, especially in Greece. NATO's Kosovo operation had a tremendous influence on Greek-Turkish relations, providing the two countries with a common goal.

As George Papandreou puts it, "The harrowing war in Kosovo brought home to the Greek people the importance and necessity of good, neighbourly relations. Fear and suspicion have long since given way to a policy of regional cooperation, based on mutual understanding and common interests (....) Greece has made an effort to take the lead in promoting stability, cooperation, and democracy in the Balkans. Given this basic, but determined, foreign policy outlook, it would have been incongruous to exclude Turkey."[18]

The Greek-Turkish rapprochement: the "seismic diplomacy"

On August 17, 1999, Turkey's Marmara region was hit by a devastating

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[18] See: Papandreou G., "Revision in Greek Foreign Policy," Western Policy Center, January 2000. <http://www.papandreou.gr/february2000/wpc_jan2000.html>.

earthquake that killed thousands of people. There was a rush of humanitarian aid from all over the world. Greece was among the first countries to send condolences and rescue teams. On September 7, 1999, Greece was also hit by an earthquake, and this time Turkey was among the first countries to send condolences and rescue teams to Greece. The two countries deemed to be "historical enemies" and who came to the brink of war in the Imia-Kardak crisis of 1996, began an unexpected process of improving relations.

One of the central arguments about the Greek-Turkish rapprochement has been that it was a product of what is usually called "civic diplomacy," "people's diplomacy," or "seismic diplomacy" initiated after the earthquakes by the peoples of both countries. According to this argument, the peoples of two countries showed their preference for friendship and peace, and the political leaders just followed after the "public's wish" in their diplomatic initiatives that gained pace in the post-quake period.

The statements of the foreign ministers themselves reflect the arguments of "people's diplomacy." For example, Greek Foreign Minister George Papandreou wrote: "Through their moving expressions of solidarity, the citizens of Greece and Turkey effectively coined a new political term: 'seismic diplomacy'.... They taught us that mutual interests can and must outweigh tired animosities."[19] A similar statement was made by Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem in his speech at a ceremony honouring him and Papandreou for their contributions to improving Greek-Turkish relations: "As representatives of Turkey and Greece, George and I are standing before you today for one simple reason: We have faithfully translated the feelings of the Turkish and Greek peoples into policies and acts."[20]

Clearly, the earthquakes did play a role in allowing positive developments in Greek-Turkish relations and especially in letting leaders on both sides claim a popular mandate for changing policies historically supported by a large majority on both sides. Yet the move toward rapprochement is well-rooted in a process of reevaluation or redefinition of political and strategic interests--a process initiated before the natural disasters made it more palatable to the Greek and Turkish publics.

Indeed, Cem argues that actual cooperation started two months before the earthquake: "Back in June 1999, we had already initiated, as two Ministers, a process

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[19] See: Papandreou G., "Working Together: Why Greece Supports Turkey's European Future." <http://www.greece.org/POLITICS/EuropeanUnion/GapGreekTurkishOpEd.stm>
[20] Speech Delivered by FM Ismail Cem at the East-West Institute On the Occasion of Presentation of 'The Statesman of the Year' Award," May 2, 2000. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupb/bi/05.htm>.

of consultation and joint work on our bilateral issues, which was later expedited by the immense solidarity between our two peoples during the tragic earthquakes of last summer."[21] Papandreou traces the cooperation back to the Kosovo operation in which both countries were involved as NATO allies: "For the first time, Turkish military planes flew over Greece carrying humanitarian aid to Kosovo." He states that after the war Greek and Turkish foreign ministers decided to cooperate in many areas such as tourism, environment, culture and education.

Just before the earthquakes, in May-June 1999, Cem and Papandreou exchanged a series of letters that included proposals for improving bilateral relations by cooperating in various fields. These letters showed that a key element in the change was a revision in the Greek perception of Turkey. Papandreou wrote, "Both Greece and Turkey have rich cultural traditions. Building a multicultural Europe means that we need to enhance our cultural identities and understand each other's specificity."[22] This type of statement is in sharp contrast with the view of his predecessor, Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos, in 1997: "We have nothing to do with Turkey. A man can't discuss things with murderers, rapists and thieves."[23]

Other actions before the earthquakes also indicated the changing atmosphere in Greek-Turkish relations: the 1997 Madrid Declaration to establish mutual respect for sovereignty rights, the decision to create a Southeastern European Brigade (SEEBRIG) for peacekeeping operations in the Balkans in 1998, and military cooperation during NATO's Kosovo operation in 1999. Clearly, then, a deeper process was at work pushing the two countries and their relationship in a new direction.[24]

After the earthquakes, the Greek and Turkish governments were active and innovative in working to legitimize their foreign policy practices in the eyes of their domestic constituencies through a very successful mobilization of the public. This process included not only a public legitimization of a new policy course but also a process of demystifying the "enemy." The post-quake media shows how this "demystification" process took place on the popular level. The mutual empathy expressed in the Greek and Turkish media following the earthquake in Turkey were

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[21] Speech Delivered by FM Ismail Cem at the East-West Institute On the Occasion of Presentation of 'The Statesman of the Year' Award," May 2, 2000. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/grupb/bi/05.htm>.
[22] Letter from Mr. George Papandreou, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Greece, to Mr. Ismail Cem, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Turkey, June 25, 1999. <http://www.greekturkishforum.org/docu_c2.htm>.
[23] Athens News Agency, *Daily News Bulletin,* September 27, 1997.
[24] See: Nachmani Am., "Turkey facing a new millennium. Coping with intertwined conflicts", Manchester University Press, 2003, p.188.

the first signs of emerging common bonds between the two peoples. A Greek newspaper cried, "We are all Turks" in its issue following the earthquake in Turkey,[25] and a Turkish newspaper responded in Greek: "Efharisto Poli, File"/"Thank You, Friend."[26]

The Helsinki Summit

In a genuine breakthrough for Greek diplomacy, Greece abandoned in the Helsinki Summit the veto against Turkey and as a result the later was granted candidate status opening the way for future incorporation in the European Union. Greece has taken a lead in promoting Turkey's EU candidacy as part of its broader rapprochement with its neighbour.[27]

In Helsinki Greece draws a new strategy on the perspective of the Turkish entry in the European Union. This strategy represents a significant shift from classical Greek policy. As George Papandreou states, "Helsinki was...a culmination of the new phase in Greek foreign policy. What instigated this fundamental change in our foreign policy? Three major elements can be credited: a) political forces engulfing the region in the post-Cold War period, b) new realities of the 'globalized' world, and c) a re-evaluation of Greece's national interests."[28]

It can be argued that Greece, after a critical self-examination, perceived that it is in Greece's interests--more than any other member of the EU--that Turkey moves closer to Europe. Turkey's approach to Europe will be an important factor in the creation of a climate of cooperation, which is an essential pre-condition if we hope to solve the differences between us."[29] Both in Greece and abroad, the decision by the Simitis government to support Turkish candidacy was heralded as bold and constructive. Even the political opposition in Greece acknowledged widespread support for the government's strategy.

Turkey's EU candidacy hinges on several important factors, set out in the Helsinki communiqué:

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[25] See: *Ta Nea*, August 20, 1999

[26] *Hurriyet*, August 21, 1999.

[27] See: "*The European Council welcomes recent positive developments in Turkey as noted in the Commission's progress report, as well as its intention to continue its reforms towards complying with the Copenhagen criteria. Turkey is a candidate State destined to join the Union on the basis of the same criteria as applied to the other candidate States.*", PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS, HELSINKI EUROPEAN COUNCIL,10 AND 11 DECEMBER 1999.

[28] See: Papandreou G., "Revision in Greek Foreign Policy," Western Policy Center, January 2000. <http://www.papandreou.gr/february2000/wpc_jan2000.html>

[29] See: Papandreou G., "Statements following a meeting with representatives of Greek NGOs who offered humanitarian aid to Turkey after the earthquake," 03.09.1999. <http://www.mfa.gr/gpap/september99/ngoturkey_e3999.html>

- *That Turkey meets the "normal" requirements of any candidate state, and is not treated as a special case.*

- *That Turkey resolves all bilateral issues with Greece before 2004. After that, Turkey will be required to take any outstanding claims to the International Court of Justice. The Greek government has long held this to be the legitimate forum for dealing with Turkey's political or territorial claims, regarding the easternmost islets of the Aegean and the demarcation of the continental shelf.*

- *That Turkey undertakes internal democratic reforms, with particular regard to the rule of law, human rights and minorities' issues.*

In addition, the EU made clear that Cyprus's EU candidacy is not dependent on a prior political solution to the island's current division into an internationally recognised state, the Republic of Cyprus, and a northern Cypriot entity carved out after the Turkish invasion in 1974.

Implications after Helsinki, the impact of the EU

One important stage in the intentional transformation of roles and interests are the degree of reciprocation by the other side. Unilateral initiatives or self-binding commitments must be rewarded in order to institutionalize norms of positive identification. This seems to be the most difficult stage of the transformative process in Greek-Turkish relations. Greece is expecting some concessions from Turkey in response to her removing the veto at the Helsinki Summit. In the summer of 2000, Greek Defense Minister Akis Tsochatzopoulos stated that "there is no prospect for Turkey's accession to the European Union if [it] does not contribute and make concessions on Cyprus." Papandreou reminded everyone that the Cyprus issue is a problem Turkey is obliged to face as a result of being officially named a candidate country seeking entry into the EU.[30]

Turkey's "Accession Partnership" with the European Union once more showed that Turkey's membership is significantly interrelated with the resolution of the border disputes in the Aegean and promoting solutions of the Cyprus issue. Turkey was expected to finalize her National Program on the basis of the Accession Partnership Document by January 2001.

Due to the significance attached to the document, a very intense debate was initiated among the major political actors and institutions of Turkey. The Turkish military opposed some of the proposed reforms--such as broadcasting and education in Kurdish--as threatening the territorial integrity of the Turkish state. There were also

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[30] See: Athens News Agency, *Daily News Bulletin*, August 2, 2000

differences of opinion among leaders of the coalition government, which delayed completion of the National Program.

Though the objections, various reform packages have been already adopted by the government of AKP in a courageous effort to fulfil the political and economic criteria of Copenhagen. But, as the December's 2004 Progress Report on Turkey of the EU Commission affirms, further step need to be taken.[31]

Moreover, it is likely that the National Program will fall short of EU expectations regarding the Aegean and Cyprus problems, as Turkey still tries to avoid any commitments on the issue. This lack of commitment certainly falls short of Greece's expectations for Turkish reciprocation to Athens' removal of its veto at the Helsinki summit. This problem could challenge a thorough, successful transformation of Greek-Turkish relations toward greater rapprochement on the basis of institutionalized norms of cooperation. This lack of institutionalization could counter the factors that have promoted major changes. In this case, instead of entering a new era, Greek-Turkish relations could shift between crisis and rapprochement in the pattern that has long existed.

Apart from the above, Greece's strategy on supporting the turkish candidacy was -and is- based on the precondition that the country's negotiation with the EU will conclude successfully and that Turkey will become a full member of the European Union. Hence, as the negations framework on the occasion of the official opening of the negotiations of the EU with Turkey clearly affirms, the process will be open ended. As a result, Greece needs to re-evaluate and revise its foreign policy strategy vis a vis the turkish candidacy. A failure in the negotiations with the EU would signify a simultaneous failure of Turkey to proceed to reconciliations on Cyprus and other bilateral issues (eg. Delimitation of the continental self, minority rights, the role of the Patriarchate, FIR, the Halki Theological School).

The Greek argument

For Greece, recent developments reflect an innovative new approach to the vexed question of relations with Turkey. The emphasis now is on positive engagement and realistic objectives, through multilateral organisations as well as bilateral initiatives.

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[31]See: "2004 Regular Report on turkey's progress towards accession", Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, October 2004, p.163 ff.

Greece's support for Turkey's EU candidacy is based on the conviction that Turkey will be motivated by the prospect of future membership to work on domestic political and economic issues, and to act as a responsible member of the European community. Greece has succeeded in convincing her European partners that Turkish claims regarding Greece and the Cyprus problem are European issues, which Greece cannot be expected to resolve single-handedly. Thus, Turkey's future in Europe depends increasingly on her own progress.

According to the Greek argument, bringing Turkey closer to Europe will bring greater security and stability to south-eastern Europe and will help achieve a climate of security, economic development, democratization, and fuller cooperation among all the countries of the region. The EU's acceptance to open the negotiations with Turkey will no doubt move the two countries closer to these goals. This does not mean that Turkey's problems have been miraculously solved. There are powerful forces in Turkey which still favour a less-than-European approach to regional and bilateral relations. The road ahead will be long and often difficult. The Turkish violations of Greek airspace and territorial claims over the continental shelf are still of concern for Greece. Domestically, Turkey must make fundamental reforms to improve its human rights record and strengthen civil society. But there are healthy forces within Turkey which Greece "will continue to support. Greece is willing to play a constructive role in the democratization of Turkey and its integration into Europe."[32] In this process, the role of the Greek government can be decisive, but so will the involvement of Greek non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local government authorities, and individual citizens, encouraging the Turkish efforts for modernization.

The shift of the Greek policy and the national political discourse

A study of the Greek national official discourse in the last years can easily reveal the Greek concerns on the Greek Turkish relations, but also the gradual change of the national political discourse.[33] In the past, the main issues discussed in the national Parliament were the security problems that Turkey posses to Greece. The
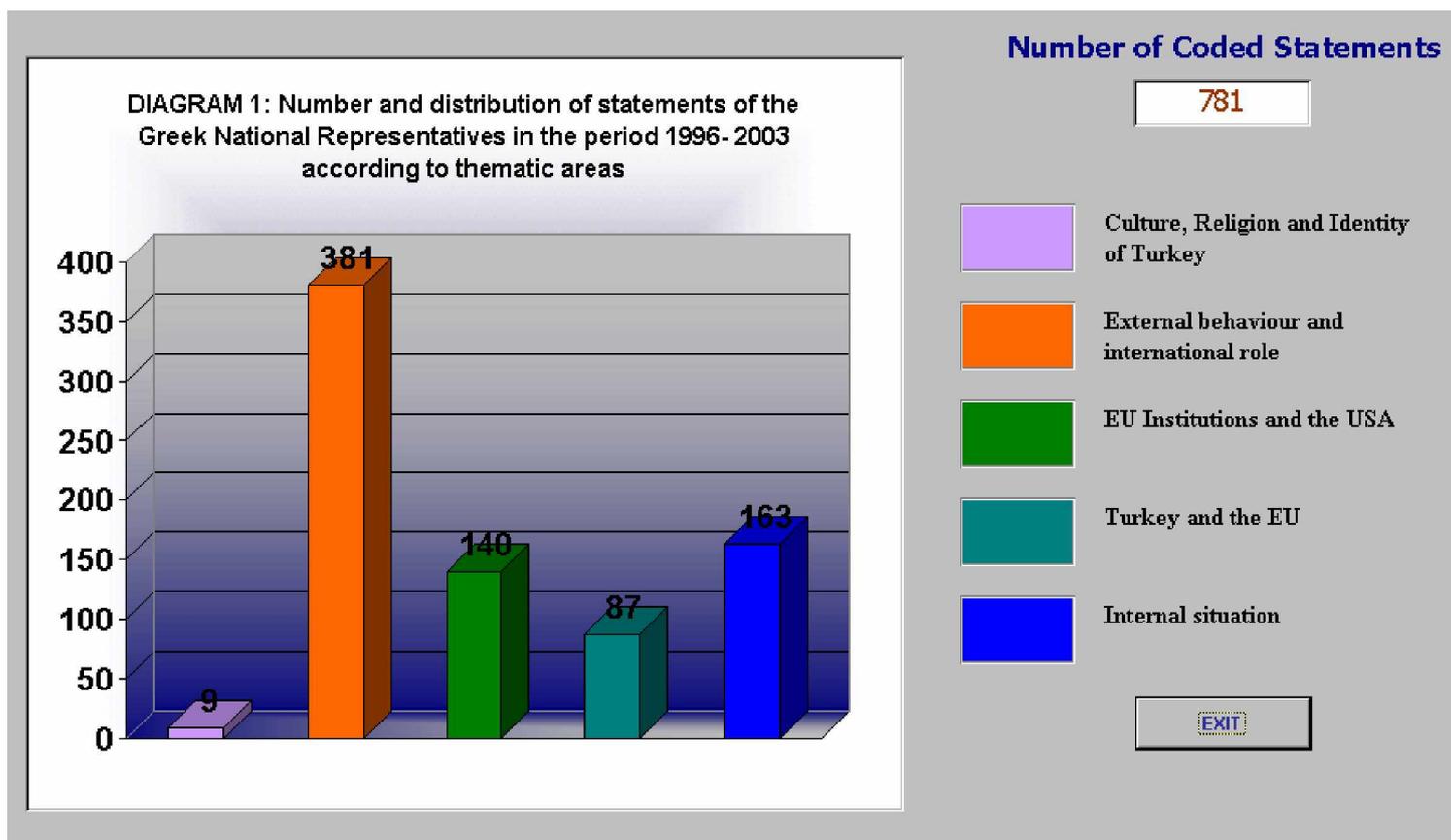
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[32] See: Papandreou G., "Revision in Greek Foreign Policy," Western Policy Center, January 2000.
<http://www.papandreou.gr/february2000/wpc_jan2000.html>

[33] The analysis is based on a Research Program conducted in the University of Athens, as a part of an international research project coordinated by the University of Konstanz. Using quantitative analysis methods, the research team of the University of Athens studied and coded 781 statements in the Greek National Parliament about Turkey from 1995 to 2003. The results of the research project were presented in the international Conference: "the European perspective of Turkey after the December 2004 decision" in Istanbul, Galatasaray University, on the 3rd and 4th of June 2005 by Prof. P. Kazakos and Dr. G. Kazakos.

period of tensions in the Greek Turkish relations is very well depicted in the national discourse. The common feeling, not only of the officials but of the public opinion also, was that Turkey poses a security threat for Greece and that its aggressive behaviour aims at the revisionism of the status quo in the Aegean.[34] Even after the Helsinki Summit, as well as the two earthquakes that the climate changes in the course of the bilateral relations, the Greek concern and main interest remain the issue of Turkey's external behaviour vis a vis its neighbouring countries.

Generally speaking, in the period 1996-2003, the Greek official political discourse is dominated by references to the external behaviour and the international role of Turkey, as seen in the diagram below. Furthermore, the internal situations of the Turkish economy, society and political life, as well as the role of the US and the EU, present a high priority in the national discourse. More concretely, the distribution of the statements of the Greek National Representatives in the period 1996-2003 goes as following:
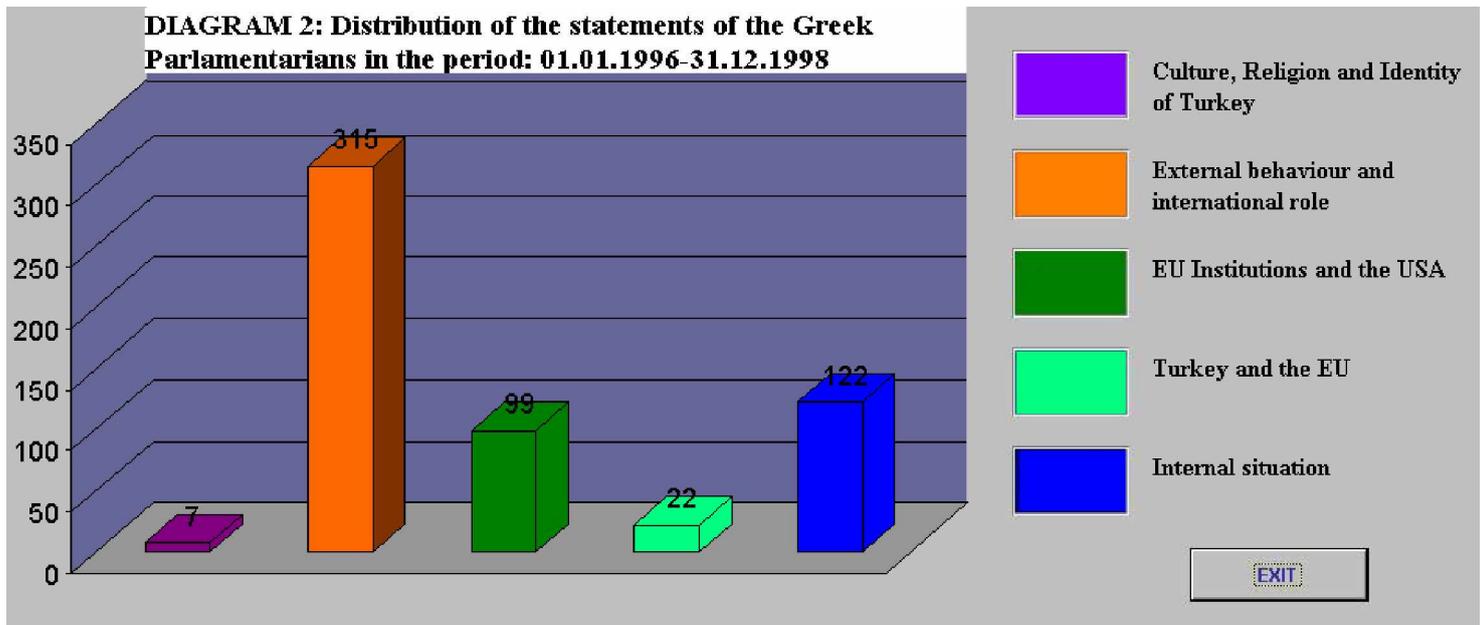

Number of Coded Statements

781

DIAGRAM 1: Number and distribution of statements of the Greek National Representatives in the period 1996-2003 according to thematic areas

- Culture, Religion and Identity of Turkey
- External behaviour and international role
- EU Institutions and the USA
- Turkey and the EU
- Internal situation

EXIT

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[34] Kazakos P., „Der Türkei Diskurs in Griechenland: Vom Primat der Aussenpolitik zum erneuerten Interesse an der Innendznamik der Türkei" in „Die Türkei Debatte in Europa. Ein Vergleich", VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2005, p. 138.

In the period between 1996 and 1999, before the rapprochement of Greece and Turkey, it is observed that the national discourse was dominated by concerns on the national security. Categorising the national discourse in five main thematic areas, it can be easily argued that the Greek debate is mainly focused on the external behaviour of Turkey and its international role. Moreover, the Greek Parliamentarians are also -but less- concerned about the minority rights in Turkey and the general internal situation of the country. In this respect, many negative statements refer to the decisive role of the army in the political scene and the "deep state". Finally, in this period, Turkey is characterised as a "pivotal" player, flirting with both the EU and the US. The following table and diagram show the distribution of the statements of the Greek National Representatives in the period 1996-1998 according to five main categories:

TABLE 1: Main Categories:[35] Distribution of the statements on Turkey in Greek Parliament Period: 01.01.1996 – 31.12.1998		
	Number of Statements: (565)	**Percentage (%)**
Culture, Religion and Identity of Turkey	7	1%
External behaviour and international role	**315**	**56%**
EU institutions and the USA	**99**	**18%**
Turkey and the EU	22	4%
Internal situation	**122**	**21%**

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[35] G. Kazakos, results of the research project presented in an international Conference " the European perspective of Turkey after the December 2004 decision" in Istanbul, Galatasaray University, on the 3rd and 4th of June.

DIAGRAM 2: Distribution of the statements of the Greek Parlamentarians in the period: 01.01.1996-31.12.1998

Legend:
- Culture, Religion and Identity of Turkey
- External behaviour and international role
- EU Institutions and the USA
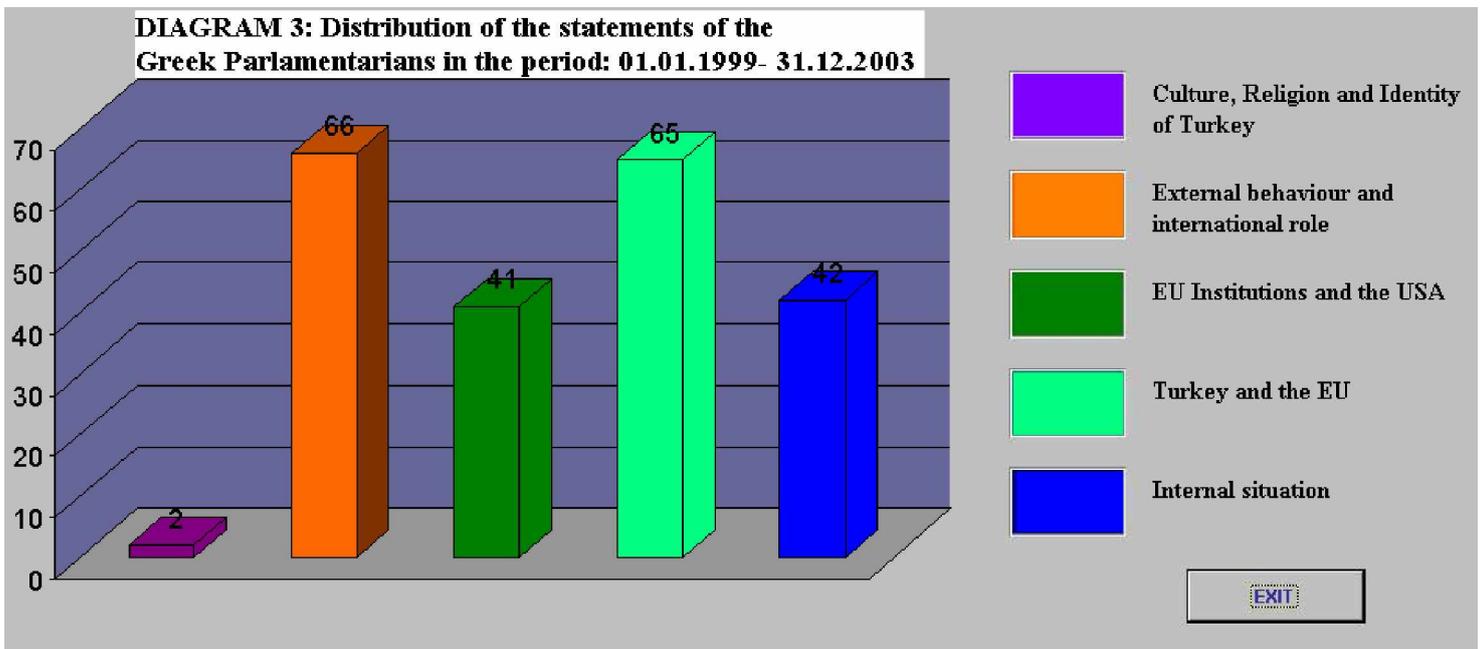- Turkey and the EU
- Internal situation

On the other hand, over the next period (01.01.1999–31.12.2003) the Greek official discourse changes, reflecting the rapprochement efforts of the two countries in the post-Helsinki era. In terms of the national security, in this period, Turkey no longer presents a threat for the Greek sovereignty; instead, the Greek national representatives are referring to Turkey as a stabilisation factor in the region and as an important regional player. With equal frequency (see table below), the official discourse refers above all to the Europeanization process of Turkey in terms of totally supporting and encouraging the efforts made. According to the Greek Parliamentarians, as closer Turkey moves to Europe so much better relations with Greece she has. A Europeanized Turkey is less dangerous. Therefore, the Greek National Representatives are more interested in the developments of the reforms in Turkey. The minority rights remain issues of great importance, but the internal reforms in the country, political and economical, are equally crucial.[36] In this period, the Greek Parliamentarians refer to Turkey in more positive terms than in the previous years and they clearly avoid any open criticism or challenge with the neighbour.[37] In the following table and diagram, the distribution of the statements in this period is presented:

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[36] Contrary to the European debate, the role of the religion in Turkey, identity issues and culture are not debated in the Greek National Parliament. (See Kazakos P., „Der Türkei Diskurs in Griechenland: Vom Primat der Aussenpolitik zum erneuerten Interesse an der Innendznamik der Türkei" in „Die Türkei Debatte in Europa. Ein Vergleich", VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, Wiesbaden 2005, p.140)

[37] Only the Representatives of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) don't "soften" their statements on Turkey and continue the negative references and criticism to Turkey.

TABLE 2: Main Categories:[38]		
Distribution of the statements on Turkey in Greek Parliament		
Period: 01.01.1999 – 31.12.2003		
	Number of Statements: (216)	Percentage **(%)**
Culture, Religion and Identity of Turkey	2	1%
External behaviour and international role	**66**	**31%**
EU institutions and the USA	41	18%
Turkey and the EU	**65**	**30%**
Internal situation	42	20%

DIAGRAM 3: Distribution of the statements of the Greek Parlamentarians in the period: 01.01.1999- 31.12.2003

Within this framework, it can be argued that the national debate on Turkey reflects the atmosphere, friendly or hostile, between the two neighbours. The shift of the Greek Foreign Policy vis à vis Turkey is reflected in the official discourse. The

[38] G. Kazakos, results of the research project presented in an international Conference " the European perspective of Turkey after the December 2004 decision" in Istanbul, Galatasaray University, on the 3rd and 4th of June.

improvement of the bilateral relations and the establishment of cooperation between the two countries shift the National official debate from the security concerns to the modernization process in Turkey.

The new environment in the bilateral relations is reflected not only in the Greek Parliament, but also on various meetings of the two countries' officials which provide concrete signs that relations between Greece and Turkey have improved and a commitment for further dialogue as well as greater optimism for a new era between the two neighbours in the future.

"In all our meetings, the Greek and new Turkish government have maintained the will to make progress down the road that the two countries have opened, to entrench all that we have achieved and to broaden cooperation," said Greek foreign minister George Papandreou at a welcoming ceremony for and his entourage at Athens International Airport on October 21.

"We are two countries on the shores of the same sea and if anything encourages our governments to keep up our mutual efforts, it is the will of the two people to turn the Aegean into a sea of peace, cooperation and development," Gül said, adding that "the determination is clear on both sides" and that "Strengthening ties between Turkey and Greece will not only be to the benefit of the two countries' peoples but will also contribute to security and stability in the region".

Conclusion

According to the statements of the Greek parliamentarians the main concern of Greece was until the recent past its security. In the new era of cooperation of the two neighbouring countries, the Greek official discourse moves from national security uncertainties to a "pro-european" debate, encouraging the reform process taking place in Turkey and supporting the turkish candidacy. The willingness to bring Turkey closer to Europe is reflected on various occasions, where Greek officials repeatedly confirm and underline that Greece favours Turkey's efforts to join the EU.

Although the Turkish accession in the EU remains still open ended, the modernization process currently taking place in Turkey calls upon closer cooperation for Greece and Turkey. The change of the Greek official discourse is a major step towards the establishment of a secure environment between the two countries. As the Greek Parliamentarians' concerns on "security issues" move in the recent period towards statements of confidence building between the two neighbours, the roads of

cooperation are open. As Papandreou said on the occasion of his counterpart's Foreign Minister Gul in 2003 said: "The friendly relations between Turkey and Greece based upon mutual respect, understanding and trust have importance not only for the economic welfare and political stability of the two countries but also for the enhancement of the peace, stability and security in the region".[39] "A new dynamic has now commenced and confidence building measures have opened new roads for our cooperation".

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[39] http://www.mfa.gov.tr/mfa/PrinterFriendly/PrinterFriendly.aspx

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